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THE AMERICAN JOURNAL OF THEOLOGY

Volume XV

APRIL, 1911

Number 2

THE HISTORICAL CHARACTER OF THE GOSPEL OF MARK

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In the spring of 1910 I published a little work called *The Earliest Sources for the Life of Jesus*, forming one of the series called "Modern Religious Problems" edited by Dr. A. W. Vernon. In a work of 131 small pages much must be assumed rather than proved, and I am very grateful for the opportunity afforded me by the editors of the *American Journal of Theology* to explain more at length and in detail the view of the Gospel according to Mark which I sketched in my little book. I am inclined to believe in the traditional authorship of this gospel, and that a chief source of the information possessed by the author consisted of what he had heard from Simon Peter. Now-a-days such an opinion calls for some detailed defense. At the present moment there is going on in Germany a prolonged controversy about the general historicity of the New Testament under the title "Hat Jesus gelebt?" ("Did Jesus ever live?"). The leading skeptics are Professor Jensen, the Assyriologist, and Professor Arthur Drews; the defenders are "liberals" such as Professors Jülicher and Weinel. I do not propose to follow this controversy here, but I mention it to show that an investigation of the historicity of the Gospel according to Mark is not out of place.¹

¹ See on this controversy the article by Professor Case in the last number of this Journal, pp. 20-42.

TRADITION AND DOGMA

It may be convenient to make one or two preliminary observations on a question of principle. Ancient history, as it has come down to us, may be said to be derived from two sources, *Tradition* and *Dogma*. Another name for Dogma is Myth, but whereas some "dogma" may be true, "myth" is always used by us for something unhistorical. Tradition is ultimately something handed down from those who saw and heard; it may be distorted in transmission, but it had its origin in direct testimony. All true history is of this category, for true history cannot be invented, it must be handed down. On the other hand, there are things in the form of history which are ultimately based on an idea, not on testimony; this is what I am calling Dogma.

Now, of course, a tale which is pure tradition is perfectly rational, for no one doubts that the course of events, as seen with the eye of omniscience, is perfectly rational. Again, a tale which is pure dogma perfectly exhibits the dogmatic idea upon which it is based, for it is not bound down to the fixed and complicated course of actual fact. In practice, however, the two kinds of tale tend to become confused. Those who hand down tradition are often tempted to "improve" it by smoothing away what appear to be irrelevancies. More especially, in ages which had little conception of the massive uniformity of Nature, tales of wonder were introduced or (more often still) tales originally wonderful were in various ways heightened till they became miracles indeed. It is the general tendency of tradition to become more "miraculous" as it gets farther from the source, and less perfectly "natural." I am not thinking only of the wonders we read of in the New Testament. What I mean is this: the real historical George Washington was a remarkably truthful man; the current tradition about George Washington has come to represent him as a miracle of truthfulness.

The reverse process is often seen in the dogmatic tale. Mythological deities undergo a kind of humanization and become partly rationalized in the process. Hercules, for instance, is ultimately founded upon the sun, and the Twelve Labors of Hercules represent the sun's journey during the year through the twelve signs of the

Zodiac. But in the most familiar form of the story Hercules comes before us as a man, magnified and non-natural, but a man for all that, with human traits and partly conditioned by human limitations. Some of the saints in the churches' Calendar are certainly not mere holy men, around whom pious legend has woven tales of wonder: the contrary is the case; they are mythical personages, such as the Great Twin Brethren of heathen religion, who have been turned into human beings in the process of making their cult Christian, and they have dropped some of the wonders that belonged to them as gods in the course of their transformation.

The mere presence or absence of "miracles" in a document cannot decide for us whether we are to reckon it as "traditional" or "dogmatic," as historical or mythical. And in any case general rules may always mislead, if they are applied without intelligence and discrimination. But there is one rule that generally holds. It is this: as we trace to its source a story known in successive stages or recensions, one that is ultimately mythical gets less and less rational, while the underlying dogma or idea becomes clearer; on the other hand, the nearer we trace to its source a story that is ultimately historical, the better it fits in with a rational view of things, though sometimes the "point" of the story seems to suffer. Irrelevant details appear, the hero is not so uniformly successful, his adversaries not so uniformly discomfited. As we get nearer the source of a real historical story, the complexity of the real course of events makes its appearance; we get a nearer view, with details that are often different from what we should have expected when we stood further off.

TEXT AND INTEGRITY OF MARK

The Gospel according to Mark, in the earliest text that has come down to us, ends at 16:8 with the words ἐφοβοῦντο γάρ. To most persons accustomed to the cadence of a Greek sentence, whether Attic or vulgar, this is almost enough of itself to prove that the conclusion is mutilated. As, however, Wellhausen still maintains² that the Gospel originally ended at 16:8, it may be worth while enumerating the arguments against such a view.

² *Das Evangelium Marci* (1909), 137.

These arguments, I venture to think, will show at the same time the difficulties in the way of those who regarded the curtailment as intentional.

At Mark 16:8 the narrative is left unfinished, the paragraph is left unfinished, the sentence is left unfinished. The narrative is left unfinished, for the evangelist's readers have been carefully prepared in 14:28 and 16:7 for an appearance of the Risen Jesus in Galilee; we expect either an account of it, or an explanation of why it did not happen. The paragraph is left unfinished, for we want to know when the women, who fled from the tomb and said nothing to anyone, finally broke silence.³ Most clearly of all, the sentence is left unfinished. Greek sentences do not often end with *γάρ*, and it is almost safe to say Greek paragraphs never end with *γάρ*. The only other sentence in the New Testament that ends with *γάρ* is John 13:13, and that (*εἰμὶ γάρ*) is a mere parenthesis in the middle of a continuous speech. When Mark wishes to tell us that certain persons did not know what to say because they were afraid, he does not end with *γάρ*: he tells us that Peter and his companions did not know what reply to make, *ἐκφοβοὶ γὰρ ἐγένοντο* (9:6). Or again, we may consider how very abrupt the paragraph Mark 11:15-18 would be, if it had finished in the middle of vs. 18 with *ἔφοβοῦντο γάρ*. In fact, I venture to think Westcott and Hort have not gone far enough when they end Mark 16:8 with a colon (*ἔφοβοῦντο γάρ·*); the clause is unfinished, *γάρ* should have no stop after it at all and it should have a grave accent *ἔφοβοῦντο γάρ . . .*). In a word, we ought to translate the half-verse "and they said nothing to any one, for they were afraid of . . .," leaving it to conjecture whether the next missing words were "the Jews" or "telling their companions."

But if the sentence, as well as the paragraph, is not finished at Mark 16:8, it becomes improbable that the Gospel can have been intentionally curtailed at this point. What originally followed it is impossible to know for certain. It has been conjectured that the Resurrection appearances may have been more "docetic" than those given in Matthew, Luke, and John. But if that were

³ See Lake, *The Historical Evidence for the Resurrection*, 73, 78 f.

the reason for cancelling the end of Mark, why should the cancel have been made in the middle of a sentence? If the person who made the cancellation was unable or unwilling himself to supply a passable conclusion (a most improbable supposition), why was the cut not made at 16:7? It may safely be affirmed that it ought to be possible to add *Amen!* at the end of every early Christian writing of which the conclusion is preserved, if not as part of the work itself, yet at least as the response of those to whom it was read. But who feels inclined to add *Amen!* at the end of Mark 16:8?

I believe that there is no satisfactory answer to be given to these questions, and that the only conclusion possible is that the end of the Gospel of Mark is not extant, because the work has been *accidentally* mutilated. But then it follows (i) that we do not know the original extent of the work, and (ii) that all our texts are derived from the one mutilated copy. It is not improbable that what is missing at the end is more, considerably more, than a single "leaf" or a few columns at the end of a roll. As I pointed out in my book,⁴ it is not unlikely that Rhoda the servant-girl owes her literary immortality to Mark: it was in the house of the mother of "John surnamed Mark" that she ran back and told her tale while "Peter continued knocking."

Most of what I have been saying is hardly new, though some of it has often been forgotten. My special reason for laying stress upon it here is to consider the second corollary. If all our copies of Mark be derived from a single copy mutilated at the end, some signs of mutilation will appear elsewhere, and the most likely form this will take is paleographical corruption in the text. If the ancestor of all our copies was torn at the end, it may very well have been torn or illegible in other places.

Minute corruptions, such as ὑπὸ for ἐπὶ in Mark 4:21, or those concerned with the spelling of πλήρης in 4:28, do not concern us here, for they are incidents of transcription which may have occurred and been corrected again many times independently. Nor again do I venture to include the broken construction of 4:31, 32, or the amazingly inaccurate chronological statement

⁴ *Sources*, 84.

about the Passover in 14:12: such things are the faults of an author, rather than of a transcriber or editor. But the transmitted text of Mark 3:17; 8:10; 12:4 does look to me like the result of paleographical corruption.

Mark 3:17: *Βοανηργές*. "Boanerges" is explained by the evangelist to mean "Sons of Thunder," but without this explanation no Hebrew or Aramaic scholar would have guessed the meaning. We should expect *βανηράμα*, or *βανηράμ*, or (as Jerome thought) *βανηρέεμ*.⁵ It is, I fear, impossible to discover what Mark wrote, or precisely how our present text originated: the one thing certain is that *Boanerges* presents every token of being a scribe's blunder.

Mark 8:10: *ἡλθεν εἰς ταμερηδαλμανουθα*. Here again we have a misspelt proper name, this time a geographical one. It is an old puzzle, for our First Evangelist evidently knew as little as we do about "the parts of Dalmanutha," and turned them into "the neighborhood of Magadan" (*τὰ ὅρια Μαγαδάν*, Matt. 15:39).⁶ Following this conjecture most of the "Western" texts read in Mark 8:10 *fines Mageda*, or *τὸ ὄρος Μαγεδᾶ*.⁷ At the same time the ordinary text (with "Dalmanutha") is so odd, that we must regard it as relatively genuine and these Western approximations to the Matthaeian text as secondary. But the corruption should be taken to include *τὰ μέρη* as well as *Δαλμανουθά*. The context demands that Jesus went definitely to some *town*, such as Capernaum or Bethsaida, not to "the parts of" some *country*, such as Galilee or Samaria. I venture to suggest that *ταμερηδαλμανουθα* is intended for Tiberias-near-Amathus (Josephus, *Ant.*, xviii, 2, 3), whether the form written by Mark was *ἡλθεν εἰς Τιβεριάδα Ἀμαθοῦς*, or something similar. In any case, "the parts of Dalmanutha" do not belong to real geography.

⁵ "Banereem filii tonitru, quod conrupte Boanerges usus optimuit" (Lagarde, *O S*, 669).

⁶ According to Eusebius (*O S*, 282:83), this is *ἡ Μαγεδάνη*, a then known locality in the neighborhood of Gerasa. That it does not quite fit the context only shows that Matthew's emendation was not based on authentic tradition.

⁷ So the Greek minuscule numbered 28 (*sic*) and the Sinai Palimpsest (Syr. S). This piece of Greek evidence is fatal to Wellhausen's conjecture that נִירָם in Syr. S does not mean "the hill" (Wellhausen's *Marcus*, ed. 2, p. 61).

Mark 12:4: ἐκεφαλίωσαν is surely nothing more than a paleographical blunder for ἐκολάφισαν. The first slave sent by the Lord of the Vineyard to receive the produce from the Wicked Husbandmen was beaten, the third was killed. This second one was insulted (*ητίμασαν*) as well as subjected to the treatment indicated by ἐκεφαλίωσαν, or (as most MSS read) ἐκεφαλαιώσαν. It is much more likely that this was a scribal error of the copy which was torn at the end, from which all our copies are derived, than that Mark invented quite unnecessarily a new Greek word to tell us that the man had something done to his head.

There may be other accidental primitive corruptions in the transmitted text of Mark, such as the omission of a word or short clause which does not seriously disturb the sense, where therefore the corruption cannot be certainly demonstrated. In that way some critics may feel inclined to explain away the few striking verbal resemblances between Matthew and Luke not shared by Mark. I am not prepared to lay much stress on this, for it is by no means certain that Matthew had the full unmutilated Mark before him. It is not inconceivable that the compiler of our Gospel according to Matthew may have been acquainted only with the mutilated form of Mark that ends with 16:8 (at ἐφοβοῦντο γὰρ . . .). Be that as it may, the importance of the demonstration of the transmission of Mark through a single mutilated copy lies chiefly in this—that it illustrates the extreme narrowness of the channel through which our knowledge of the external events of the Ministry has come down to us.

WREDE'S "MESSIASGEHEIMNIS"

The controversy to which I referred at the beginning of this paper is mainly interesting as an indication of the state of general information about the Gospel in the most learned country in the world. The investigator can, if he chooses, leave it more or less on one side. But no one who treats Mark as a historical document can afford to neglect the book called *Messiasgeheimnis*, published in 1901 by the late Professor Wrede.⁸ This work is the most radical attack upon the historicity of the gospel tradition that has

⁸ William Wrede was professor at Breslau. He died in 1907.

ever been made. It is not that Wrede's solution is satisfactory; far from it. But some of the questions which he raised are real and fundamental problems, which cannot be settled by offhand or conventional answers.

Wrede starts off by assuming the literary priority of the Gospel of Mark. Fifty years of investigation from various points of view have proved that Matthew and Luke are based on a document which is either our Mark (as I myself believe), or a document which only differs from our Mark in small and comparatively unimportant details. Above all, it is the Markan framework upon which the fresh matter in the other gospels is arranged. The Fourth Gospel, of course, Wrede leaves out of account, at least in his preliminary stages, as being from a historical point of view altogether secondary. But this way of looking at our authorities for the gospel history, a way not peculiar to Wrede, and shared indeed by him with almost all modern investigators, makes our knowledge of the course and development of the life of Jesus to rest entirely on the authority of the Gospel of Mark.⁹ If the general plan of Mark be historical, our general notion of the career of Jesus may be historical; if not, our general notion rests on nothing and must simply fall to pieces.

Wrede further points out that very few investigators of the gospel history are content to take the narrative of Mark as it stands. "Man subtrahiert und man deutet um" (p. 85). This process of *diminishing* and of *explaining away* the perplexing element in Mark, an element by no means confined only to "miracles," is, according to Wrede, unscientific and historically unsound. It assumes that Mark is a historical account overlaid with unhistorical embroidery. But what right have we, if we declare so much of the tale to be unhistorical, to be sure that there is any historical kernel at all?

Naturally Wrede does not deny the existence of Jesus of Nazareth, and he is quite willing to admit a number of more or less historical features which have been incorporated in the picture drawn by Mark, and to have come down to us. According to Wrede,

⁹ Wrede, *op. cit.*, 6.

Jesus came forward as a teacher, first and principally in Galilee. He was surrounded by a company of disciples, went about with them, and gave them instruction. To some of them he accorded a special confidence. A large multitude sometimes attached itself to him, in addition to the disciples. He is fond of discoursing in parables. Besides the teaching there are the miracles. These make a stir, and he is thronged by the multitudes. He gives special attention to the cases of demoniacs. He is in such close touch with the people that he does not hesitate to associate even with publicans and sinners. Towards the law he takes up an attitude of some freedom. He encounters the opposition of the Pharisees and the Jewish authorities. They set traps for him and endeavour to bring about his fall. Finally they succeed, when he ventures to show himself not only on Judaean soil, but in Jerusalem. He remains passive and is condemned to death. The Roman administration supports the Jewish authorities.¹⁰

Wrede then goes on to point out that these are very far from being the chief features of the portrait of Jesus given us in Mark. The characteristic feature in that portrait is that Jesus is, and at the same time is not, the Messiah. According to Wrede, the historical Jesus, though he may have been the ethical teacher and the good physician, was not the Christ and did not claim to be the Christ. It was the conviction of Peter and Peter's companions that Jesus had appeared to them alive after his crucifixion, which made them for the first time draw the inference, "Our Rabbi must have been the Messiah."

Those who have read Schweitzer's *Von Reimarus zu Wrede* know the answer that a thoroughgoing eschatologist can make to Wrede's general conclusions. We might further ask Wrede what reason there is for regarding the historical Jesus as a teacher or as a healer, if the account in Mark be regarded as quite unhistorical. But after all, this is giving up the case to the professed skeptic: it does not answer the difficulties of detail raised by Wrede in the exegesis of the actual text of Mark.

And Wrede's book undoubtedly makes out a most impressive case. How are we to look at the claim of Jesus to have been the Messiah in his own lifetime? In what sense did he "come forward as Messiah"? What do the "injunctions of silence" after mighty works really mean? And how are we to interpret the public acts

¹⁰ Wrede, *op. cit.*, 130, quoted also in Schweitzer's *Quest of the Historical Jesus* (i.e., the English translation of *Von Reimarus zu Wrede*), 336.

of Jesus that do really imply "Messianic claims"? By what defense can we save the historical credit of the Gospel of Mark from Wrede's formidable attack?

It is undoubtedly a formidable attack, slow, methodical, relentless, moving along like the Car of Juggernaut. I confess that I am going to "take it lying down," and that all I venture to do by way of amelioration is by way of *subtrahieren* and *umdeuten*, by diminishing some of the weight of the attack, and by moving the car a little, ever so little, to the side. By these means I hope to do something toward saving the credit of Mark's Gospel as a historical document.

THE EVANGELIST AND HIS MATERIALS

We do not possess the sources, whatever they may have been, from which the evangelist Mark worked. But the way in which the text of Mark itself is altered in certain directions by later evangelists does in some cases suggest that, so far from forcing history to fit his dogmas, he was rather encumbered by historical data that he did not dare to modify. No better instance can be given than the familiar tale of the Barren Fig Tree.

Everyone knows the story in Matt. 21:18-22:

In the morning as he returned to the city, he hungered. And seeing a fig tree by the wayside he came to it and found nothing thereon but leaves only; and he saith to it "Let there be no fruit from thee henceforward for ever." And the fig tree withered away immediately. And seeing it the disciples marvelled, saying "How did the fig tree wither away immediately?" And Jesus answered and said to them "Amen, I say to you, if ye have faith and doubt not, ye shall not only do what is done to the fig tree, but even if ye should say to this mountain Be thou taken up and cast into the sea, it shall be done. And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive."

There is really no fault to be found with the telling of this story, except its general improbability. According to the tale as told by Matthew, no room is left for rationalization on *a priori* grounds. Jesus withers the fig tree immediately by a word, showing thereby his complete control over nature, and he uses the incident to enforce the lesson that a man with perfect faith will obtain in prayer whatever he asks for. If the incident had been

reported by Matthew alone, we should have felt ourselves justified not only in disbelieving the story, but also in regarding it as manifestly mythical, a piece of invention designed to enforce the doctrine of the magical efficacy of believing prayer.

But, as a matter of fact, this is not the literary genesis of the story in Matthew. Really it is derived from the story told in Mark 11:12-14, 24-25. From the point of view of effect, the truth of the tale being assumed, it has been immensely improved by Matthew's recasting, but from the point of view of the historian, who does not assume that what he is told is all true, but desires to elicit the truth if there be any, the original in Mark is far more instructive. Mark has:

On the morrow when they were come out from Bethany he hungered. And seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, he came if haply he might find anything thereon: and coming to it he found nothing but leaves; for it was not the season of figs. And he answered and said to it "No man eat fruit from thee henceforward for ever." And his disciples heard. . . . [Here follows the Cleansing of the Temple.]

And every evening he went forth out of the city; and passing by in the morning they saw the fig tree withered away from the roots, and Peter calling to remembrance saith to Him "Rabbi, lo, the fig tree which thou cursedst is withered away!" And Jesus answering saith to him "Have faith in God,—Amen, I say to you, whosoever shall say to this mountain Be thou taken up and cast into the sea, and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that what he saith cometh to pass, he shall have it. Therefore I say to you, All things whatsoever ye pray and ask for, believe that ye have received them and ye shall have them. And whensoever ye stand praying, forgive if ye have aught against any man, that your Father in heaven also may forgive you your trespasses."

I do not propose to set forth a conjecture as to what really happened to the fig tree, for I do not know and I do not think the evidence is of a kind that will tell us. But the impression made upon me by the tale in Mark is not of dogmatically invented history, but of a transmission of traditions with which the writer is somewhat embarrassed.

Of all current explanations, surely the most improbable is the often-repeated theory that Mark's narrative is a distorted version of the Parable of the Fig Tree given in Luke 13:6-9. I cannot but suppose that the story in Mark, so odd, so unmoral, so unlike

conventional ideas of what Jesus ought to have done and said, does really rest upon reminiscence, however inaccurate, of an actual occurrence. I do not profess to know what caused the fig tree to be withered twenty-four hours after Jesus had spoken, but the final verse about forgiveness—quite unexpected, quite unlike what a mere compiler would have added—suggests to me a genuine Saying, corresponding to a change of mood in Jesus himself. It was not Jesus, but Peter, who noticed the tree this second morning. On the previous day Jesus was crossing over to set the Temple in order. He is now convinced that his word had doomed the tree; does it warn him to forgive his adversaries in Jerusalem?

In any case it would have been perfectly easy for Mark to have told the story more effectively, if he had felt himself free to do so; the narrative in Matthew shows us how easily it could be done. The real value of the tale of the Fig Tree for us today is that it exhibits the evangelist as a transmitter of reminiscence, rather than as a dogmatic historian.

THE ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM

We can now go back to discuss the Entry into Jerusalem, as told in Mark. The importance of the incident for the modern critic lies in its alleged messianic character. This is more or less true of the tale as told both in Matthew and in Luke. And here again we may use their methods as giving us some kind of idea in what directions an early Christian evangelist would modify tradition.

The characteristic of the Entry is its publicity: what interests the modern critic in it is the action of the crowd. The Evangelist Matthew tells us *his* view of the matter; he says, What came to pass happened that the prophecy of Zechariah might be fulfilled. That is a perfectly proper view for a later Christian to take, given the current theory of prophecy; but Matthew is not so unhistorically minded as to tell us that the crowds who shouted were trying to fulfil a passage in the Old Testament. We may go further: it is possible that Jesus himself, or one or two out of those who intimately shared their Master's thoughts, may have

thought that the King was coming to the Daughter of Zion as had been foretold. The question is whether they imparted their thoughts to the crowd, whether this modest procession was messianic to the crowd, whether it was a *public* claim by Jesus and his followers that he was the Christ.

According to Matt. 21:9 the crowds cried "Hosanna to the Son of David"; according to Luke 19:38 they cried "Blessed is the King." With such phases going before, "Blessed is he that cometh in the Name of the Lord" can mean nothing but "Here is the Christ, David's predestined heir." On the other hand, it is right to notice that each of these evangelists actually tells us what was in the minds of the crowd. Luke (vs. 37) says they were praising God for all the mighty works they had seen, and Matthew (vs. 11) says that they told the people of Jerusalem that Jesus was a prophet from Galilee. Here then is a patent contradiction: the crowd uses messianic cries, but its intention is not to herald the Messiah.

We turn to Mark, the source of both Matthew and Luke, for an explanation, and we find it is quite simple. All that has happened is that the later evangelists, in paraphrasing the words of their source, have made the *voces populi* more Christian than the earliest tradition had handed down. With every inducement to make the Galilean crowd salute Jesus as king, Mark has avoided doing so. According to Mark, Jesus rides in the midst of a group of enthusiastic adherents, but what they say is merely (Mark 11:9, 10): "Hosanna! Blessed is he that cometh in the Name of the Lord! Blessed is the coming Kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest!" In this, the phrase from Ps. 118:26 means no more than it usually does in a Jewish mouth, viz., "greeting in God's name," a saying appropriate to anyone who comes on a religious errand. The disciples do proclaim the kingdom of David, which is Messiah's kingdom, the kingdom of God; they proclaim this kingdom to be at hand, just as Jesus (Mark 1:15) and John the Baptist had done. But they do not proclaim the Prophet of Galilee to be the Messiah.

And what is the conclusion of the Entry into Jerusalem, according to Mark? Is all the city moved? Does Jesus proceed at

once to cast out the buyers and sellers from the Temple, while the children cry "Hosanna to the Son of David"? No: Mark says (11:11), "And he entered into Jerusalem into the Temple, and having looked round on everything, it being now late, he went forth to Bethany with the Twelve." I find it difficult to believe that this is the voice of a dogmatic historian; it sounds to me more like that of the interpreter of Simon Peter, the chronicler of Simon Peter's reminiscences.

All this is not to belittle the gospel history. In the light of after events the doings of Jesus and the disciples are of great importance *to us*, but it is a mistake to suppose that to contemporary observers they must have seemed more than a ripple on the surface. And still more mistaken is the view that turns the shouting crowd into anything more than a company of Galileans who had come up to the Holy City from Jericho with one whom they believed to be a prophet sent from God.

But someone may say, "What of the blind man Bartimaeus at Jericho? Did not he greet Jesus as 'Son of David'?" Here again it seems to me that we must distinguish between the actual incident and what Christian thought made of it. That a blind beggar should call anyone "Son of David," when expecting or begging for a gift, is surely not in itself very remarkable. Peter might take it for an omen, Jesus himself might take it for an omen, but the crowd merely tell the blind man to hold his tongue.

If this view be taken of the Entry into Jerusalem, Wrede's remark, that here Jesus let himself be the subject of "a messianic ovation," simply falls to the ground.¹¹ As we have seen, the Entry into Jerusalem was, according to Mark, the ovation of a prophet of the kingdom of God, but not a public claim to be Messiah. It does not contradict the refusal of Jesus two days later to tell the Temple aristocracy by what authority he acted.¹²

¹¹ Wrede, *op. cit.*, 40, 69, 237.

¹² This is a convenient place to record my opinion that the events related in Mark 11:2-6; 14:13-16, do hint at previous acquaintanceships and arrangements in Jerusalem, but surely if the evangelist had intended the colt tied by the way-side or the man bearing the water-pot to have been there by miracle, or have been known to have been there by miracle, he would have given some indication of it. We are not told that the disciples "marveled," or said, "Who then is this?"

It must not be forgotten that the question whether Jesus of Nazareth was the Christ and the question whether he spoke and acted with divine Authority are two questions, not one. To us, indeed, they seem like two ways of regarding the same problem. We are inclined to doubt the reality of messages from the unseen world, so that if we regard the Mission of Jesus as having been in any sense real we are probably content to think of him as the true Messiah. But that is not the way in which Jews looked at the matter in the first century A.D. Of the special historical positions championed by Schweitzer none seems to me more probable, or more illuminating, than the theory that what changed the populace at Jerusalem from an attitude of friendly attention to one of contemptuous indifference, was simply this—that they found out that the prophet from Galilee actually had claimed to be the Messiah.¹³

Eighteen centuries and a half of Christian theology have dulled our appreciation of the paradox implied by such a claim. We tend to confuse the rôle of Elijah, who prepares for the kingdom of God, with that of the Messiah, who rules in the kingdom when God has made it a present reality. For a man to claim to be the Messiah, when he was not *de facto* King of Israel and Ruler of the kings of the earth, was a patent contradiction. That Jesus the Nazarene was really a prophet, sent with a message from the God of Israel, was not an unreasonable claim. It might be true; even so Amos had come to the capital with a message from God to his people. But when the Messiah is come, all the world will know it: “he will summon all the nations, and some of them he will spare and some of them he will slay.”¹⁴ When the Jewish multitudes at Jerusalem heard that the Galilean prophet had claimed to be Messiah, being at the time a prisoner in custody, they lost interest in him altogether. A Messiah in prison, a Messiah who was being done to death, was no Messiah at all: “Let the Messiah,” said they, “the King of Israel, come down now from the cross that we may see and believe!” There is no reason to suppose that those who mocked Jesus on the cross would have mocked him, substituting “Prophet” for “Messiah, King of

¹³ *Quest*, 395 (end of chap. xix).

¹⁴ *Apocalypse of Baruch*, 72:2.

Israel," had he merely been put to death for claiming to be sent from God. No one doubted that John the Baptist had been sent from God, merely because Herod had murdered him. But an unsuccessful Messiah, as Paul very truly says, was a scandal.

MARK'S PICTURE OF THE MINISTRY

The discussion of the Entry into Jerusalem concerns much more than a detail of exegesis. If the view here taken be correct, both as to the event itself and as to Mark's account of it, then what is reckoned by Wrede as the great inconsistency of Mark disappears, and the question arises why we should not take as genuine history Mark's "dogma" that the messiahship of Jesus was a secret. There are three alternatives. There is the ordinary view, that Jesus, at least in the later period of his career, publicly declared himself as Messiah. There is Wrede's view, that he did not claim to be Messiah in his lifetime nor was thought to be so by his disciples, but was first believed to have been the Messiah as a result of the visions or appearances which the disciples experienced after his death on the cross. And there is the view set forth in Mark, that Jesus was indeed convinced that he was the Messiah and that his intimate disciples came to believe it, too, but that he bade them keep it secret from the world in general. According to Mark, Jesus avows his messiahship before Caiaphas, but only when his condemnation to death was already decided on and his judges were merely seeking a convenient pretext for the sentence.

One of the most serious objections to Wrede's view is that it does not explain why the appearances of Jesus to Simon Peter and others after his death should have made them think that their Master was the Messiah. There is a vast difference between the inference "Our Rabbi must have been the Messiah," which is what Wrede makes Peter draw, and "Our Rabbi must have been the Messiah *after all*," which is what the other theories demand. It is possible to understand that the disciples came to believe that Jesus was what he claimed to be; it is very hard to believe that his appearing to them should have made them think of him for the first time as Messiah.

But now we have to consider in turn Wrede's main objection

to Mark's account of the Ministry, that the course of events as given by Mark is totally inconceivable and contradictory, and that what makes it so contradictory is the "dogma" of the secret messiahship. It is inconceivable, according to Wrede, that the disciples should have been so unreceptive; it is inconceivable that the demoniacs should have been so quick to recognize him; it is inconceivable that the injunctions of silence after miraculous cures should have had any effect, if cures such as are described took place—and if they did not take place, what becomes of Mark's picture?

Let us begin by admitting a great deal of Wrede's acute criticism of the narrative of Mark to be fair and to the point. He reminds us that we cannot regard the gospel demoniacs as being cases of nervous disease and at the same time ascribe to them supernatural knowledge. Mark does ascribe to them, or rather to the demons by which these men were "possessed," supernatural knowledge of the person of Jesus; but then he regards the demons as real persons, not as pathological states. If we are to continue to understand what Mark calls "a man with an unclean spirit" to be a man suffering from epileptic fits or some form of "alienation," we must further understand that the definite recognition of Jesus by the unclean spirit as "Holy one of God" (1:24), or "Christ" (1:34), or "Son of the Most High" (vs. 7), must be regarded as interpretations given to inarticulate cries by Mark or by the tradition which he is following.

In doing this, however, we ought to realize quite clearly that we are reconstructing the scene in accordance with what we think probable, and so far as we do so we must recognize that the details of the story as given in Mark arise from imagination and not directly from reminiscence. But after all, is not the operation of this kind of imagination historically probable? These stories that we read in the gospel, supposing them to be based on Peter's reminiscences, are what Peter remembered of the few decisive months in Galilee after twenty years of Christian experience. Indeed, according to Christian tradition, they are not even that: they are what Mark remembered of Peter's reminiscences after Peter's death. We need not, therefore, expect an impossible standard of accuracy in reporting. That Jesus impressed those

who heard him as one who spoke with personal authority, that he cured men afflicted with nervous disorders by exercising his personal authority, that such men frequently showed that they felt the personal influence of Jesus, as soon or even before he spoke directly to him—that is what I consider historically probable, and that is what seems to me to be indicated by the narratives of Mark in which the demons are said to recognize Jesus as the Messiah or the Son of God at a time when no normal human being was giving him such titles.

We come now to the “Injunctions of Silence”: what are we to make of them? And here I venture to think that some of the difficulty arises from *Vorstellungen*, from preconceived notions, not Peter’s and Mark’s, but of our own modern hygienic philanthropy. Do we not tend to consider our Lord as if he were the medical officer of a philanthropic institution, bound to give his professional services to all who come forward? We sometimes do not think the matter out and so we allow ourselves to mix up incongruous historical presentations. Even if Jesus were endowed with full divine power to heal all and every disease, there is no more reason to suppose that the divine power incarnate in Jesus would have entered into a general crusade to cure and heal indiscriminately, than the same divine power does today in London or Chicago. In any case the message of Jesus was, “The kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe,” not, “The kingdom of God is at hand; come and be cured.” Luke the Physician does indeed tend to lay stress on the cures accomplished by Jesus, but even he never represents Jesus as searching out patients. The gospel cures are all occasional, unpremeditated.

Is it then surprising that our oldest historical source should represent Jesus as commanding those whom he did heal to say as little as possible about it? It represents him not indeed as withdrawing himself from the ignorant or the sinner (2:17), but yet as withdrawing from the crowd (3:9); it is by a special and occasional feeling of pity, not out of general and constitutional philanthropy, that he gives up a plan of temporary retirement (6:34).

In one respect these injunctions of silence differ from the rebukes to the demons. The sick folk who have been healed are simply

told to say nothing about their cure. Mark does not say that the sick folk recognized Jesus to be the Messiah as the result of their cure, or indeed that anyone recognized Jesus as the Messiah because he did cures. No one expected the Messiah to do cures or exorcisms. Elijah had raised the widow's son, Elisha had cured Naaman, but David had not been a healer, and whether the Messiah was conceived as the Son of David or as the altogether supernatural Judge of men, there is nothing to show that they looked for him to be an exorcist. After the event, the evangelist Matthew sees in the healings performed by Jesus a fulfilment of prophecy¹⁵ and turns the mere astonishment of the crowds into the question "Can this be the Son of David?"¹⁶ But there is nothing of this in Mark. There we read, and it is supported by the source Q, that the adversaries of Jesus supposed that he worked exorcisms by a pact with the demon Beelzebul, and the reply of Jesus is, "No, if the demons are being driven out, that shows their time is fast coming to an end. It is as I say, the Kingdom of God is at hand."¹⁷

In Mark what we sometimes call "the ministry of healing" is represented as an accident and an importunity, something which takes place as the result of an interruption, something granted as a special favor, certainly as something unsought by Jesus and outside his own plans. Can we wonder that the boon is sometimes granted with a caution to say nothing about it? And why? The reason is surely plain. Not so much that the past cure shall not be talked of, but that no further encouragement may be given to future applicants, who may be, and probably will be, quite unsuitable.¹⁸

It will be convenient rapidly to run through the various "mighty works" recorded in Mark and see where the injunctions of silence actually come.

Mark 1:21-27 (the Demoniac in the Synagogue): Here we have an interruption of the "teaching" by a madman who is quieted by the personal

¹⁵ Matt. 8:17.

¹⁶ Matt. 12:23: contrast Luke 11:14.

¹⁷ Mark 3:26: cf. Luke 11:20=Matt. 12:28 (from Q).

¹⁸ What the belief that a man is a *hakim* means in the East may be seen from the pathetic account in E. G. Browne's *Year among the Persians*, e.g., pp. 342, 345.

authority of Jesus. It is the first incident of the kind and makes a great sensation. There is no injunction of silence as to the cure: it is the "demon" who is told to hold his tongue and go (*φιμώθητι καὶ ἔξελθε*).

Mark 1:28 (the fame of Jesus): cf. 7:37: No doubt these perorations are the composition of the evangelist; there is no hint in them that anyone takes the wonder-worker to be the Messiah.

Mark 1:29-31 (Peter's wife's mother): The first cure of illness, as distinct from what was regarded as exorcism.

Mark 1:32-38 ("At even, when the sun did set"): The result of the scene in the synagogue is that as soon as the legal Sabbath is over a great crowd comes with invalids and madmen to be treated: "many" are healed. There is no injunction of silence—what would have been the good?—but the ejaculations of the mad and the half-witted are suppressed. This was understood by the evangelist, and probably by the evangelist's informant, whoever it may have been, to have been occasioned by the supernatural knowledge of the demons, who are commanded not to betray the secret of the messiahship. Given the commanding influence which Jesus possessed and exercised over these "alienists" (to use the modern medical slang), is not the interpretation given in Mark psychologically natural for a Christian, who had been an eyewitness, to make?

Mark 1:35-38 (Jesus goes away alone): What is the result of the sudden popularity of Jesus, not as a prophet of the coming kingdom of God, but as a faith-healer and exorcist? The result is that he goes away alone, in order to make a new start elsewhere.

Mark 1:39 (another peroration).

Mark 1:40-45 (the Leper): The Leper's request, though granted, is received with anger (*δργισθεῖς*).¹⁹ He is told to say nothing, but disobeys. As a result Jesus is thronged, and therefore avoids the towns. For all that, people begin to search him out in lonely places.

Mark 2:1-12 (the Paralytic), and 3:1-6 (the Withered Hand): These are cures done in public, where any injunction of silence would have been out of place. In each case the successful healing is followed by a withdrawal of Jesus from the town to the shores of the Sea of Galilee (2:13; 3:7), where he can get privacy from the crowd in a boat (3:9).

Mark 3:10, 11: This is another peroration, repeating what has been already said, that Jesus habitually silenced the demons.

Mark 4:35-41 (the Stilling of the Storm): No injunction of silence, but in its place we find a rebuke to the disciples for being "fearful."

Mark 5:1-20 (the Gerasene Demoniac and the Swine): The effect of the miracle here in this gentile district is not that Jesus is thronged by an unfortunate crowd, but that the inhabitants press him to go away (vs. 17). Here

¹⁹ So Tatian, Codex Bezae, and the earlier Latins, instead of *σπλαγχνισθεῖς*. I cannot doubt that *δργισθεῖς* is the true reading.

again an injunction of silence would have been out of place and so we do not find one. The cured demoniac is told to go to his home in the Decapolis, very likely at Gerasa itself, and to tell in that heathen land how the *God of Israel* (οὐ κύπειος, vs. 19) had had mercy on him. It seems to me probable that the story may have reached Mark from Gerasa, and that that is why the action is represented as taking place in "the country of the Gerasenes." In that case the ultimate authority for the tale would be the reminiscences of the recovered alienist himself.

Mark 5:21-43 (Jairus and the Woman with an Issue): In the Woman with an Issue we have the story of a cure done in public and therefore without an injunction of silence. But the daughter of Jairus is raised in a room from which the crowd has been excluded. What form, as a matter of fact, does the injunction take? Jesus belittles the case to the crowd: "the girl is not dead but asleep" (vs. 39); to the parents he says, "Say nothing about it, but take care of your child" (vs. 43), and—he goes elsewhere (6:1a).

Mark 6:5 (cures done in "his own country"): Here Jesus is not thronged, but meets with opposition. There is therefore no need for any "injunction of silence," and we find none.

Mark 6:35-45 (the Five Thousand): No injunction of silence, but the crowd is sent away at once; cf. 1:35; 3:13.

Mark 6:46-52 ("Walking on the Sea"): No injunction of silence; cf. 4:35-41.

Mark 6:53-56. A peroration, similar in scope to 1:28; 3:10 ff. There are here no injunctions of silence, but according to Mark it is now that Jesus actually carries out his plan of retiring into the heathen district of Tyre.

Mark 7:24-30 (the Syrophenician Woman): This whole story starts by explaining that Jesus had desired privacy, but failed to obtain it.

Mark 7:31-37 ("Ephphatha"): Here the deaf man is cured away from the crowd, and Jesus enjoins silence but is disobeyed. The concluding verses form a peroration similar to 1:28, etc.

Mark 8:1-10 (the Four Thousand): Similar to 6:46-52.

Mark 9:14-29 (the Lunatic Boy), 10:46-52 (Bartimaeus), and 11:12-14, 20-25 (the Barren Fig-Tree), contain no injunctions of silence.

Finally we have Mark 8:30 and 9:9, in which Peter and his companions are told not to speak of the messiahship or the Transfiguration of Jesus. It will be sufficient here to remark on these most important passages, that Peter, being now aware of the messiahship of Jesus, is thereby put on the same footing as the demons. The same reasons that made it expedient for the demons to keep silence will now also apply to Peter.

When all these passages are considered together, it will be seen

that they are consistent. They represent the messiahship of Jesus as a secret from men, not to be published abroad by those, whether men or demons, who for any reason are aware of it. Further, they represent Jesus as one who possessed indeed wonderful and inexplicable gifts of healing and power over Nature, but at the same time was unwilling to make these powers part of his plan. He goes out of his way to escape the crowds who flock to him on account of his reputation as a healer and exorcist. If he is persuaded to exercise his powers in circumstances where concealment is impossible he leaves the place at once. All this is inexplicable if the design of Jesus had been to "found a society" there and then, or to teach a new morality, or in any way to appeal to his own influence or activity. But it is quite consistent with the view that the main content of his "teaching" was, "The time is fulfilled and the Kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the good news" (Mark 1:15). It is quite consistent with the view that he was waiting for the approaching End of the Age. It is consistent also with the view that he himself was persuaded that he was the destined Messiah, foreordained to be manifested as Messiah in God's good time. But meanwhile his work was to rouse God's people to repent. He had been sent not to be ministered unto but to minister, to save Israel from the wrath to come, not to be gazed at as a successful medicine-man. "Rejoice not," he said to some of his disciples when they boasted of their success, "rejoice not that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."²⁰

I have attempted to show that the "injunctions of silence" to Peter, and to the demons who were believed to have supernatural knowledge, not to betray the secret of the messiahship, were conditioned by the very idea of the messiahship. I have further pointed out that the "injunctions of silence" after wonderful healings are due to the very peculiar attitude ascribed by Mark to Jesus with reference to his powers over disease. In neither of these points are Wrede's strictures on Mark as a chronicler really justified. How are we to consider the remaining accusation,

²⁰ Luke 10:20; compare Enoch 114:1 f.: "Your names are written before the glory of the Great One. Be hopeful. . . . Soon ye will shine as the stars of heaven."

that the unreceptiveness of the disciples is inconceivable, if the course of events had really been as Mark depicts?

To begin with, we are surely right in "subtracting" something from the narrative as it stands. Most of us have read Dr. Sanday's interesting remark about accepting the narratives of miracle and the miraculous "with a note of interrogation."²¹ We should no doubt have used different language had we witnessed the deeds of the Savior, for our whole view of the universe is different from that which was current in the first century A.D. among high and low, ignorant and educated alike. Besides, our narrative, even if it be based on the reminiscences of Peter the eyewitness, has passed through twenty or thirty years of Peter's Christian experience. No wonder that he may have blamed himself for not recognizing sooner in the Prophet of Galilee the Messiah-to-be. But after all, does the narrative of Mark represent the disciples as really so blind and unreceptive? When the storm appeared to die down at Jesus' word, they said, "Who then is this?" Were they justified in saying more? It was a proof to them that God was with their masterful Prophet, but it did not prove him to be the Messiah. The yoke of the Romans remained unbroken, things went on just as they had always done, there was no sign from heaven.

But though the followers of Jesus do not think of their Master as Messiah, they are loyal to him as a prophet. We only hear of one "traitor," and it is not certain what prompted the action of Judas Iscariot. It must be admitted that there was a good deal to try their loyalty. The "kingdom of God" was not more visibly at hand at the end of the ministry than at the beginning. Then, again, whenever Jesus spoke of the future it was always of the fiery trial coming: "Look at your own fate; you will be beaten and killed!" (Mark 13:9 ff.). "If anyone wants to follow me, let him follow me—to execution!" (Mark 8:34). Notwithstanding this, a company of Galileans do follow their Prophet and enter Jerusalem with him. Peter and some others of the more intimate associates of Jesus have guessed his secret. *They* know that he believes himself to be the destined Messiah and they believe it,

²¹ Sanday, *Life of Christ in Recent Research* (1907), 103.

too, though some appear, from Mark 10:32, to have at times had their misgivings. But it is likely enough that their ideas about the future were both vague and crude. We have in Mark 8:31 f.; 9:31 f.; 10:33 f., what Peter remembered of his Master's predictions of his Passion in the light of after events, but even if the words were correctly remembered, what is it to be supposed that the disciples made of them? If "the Son of Man" had anything to do with the Man whom Daniel had seen in vision, what had he to do with being killed by men?

It seems to me that both the extreme views which have been held about the predictions of the Passion are untenable, and that the historical truth lies along the lines recorded by Mark. On the one hand, it is unreasonable to assume the complete accuracy of the words as given in Mark, and further to interpret them in the light of after events, and then to turn round and say that Peter after the arrest and trial of Jesus acted as though he had never heard the predictions. When a trusted leader prophesies disaster, even if the words be remembered, they are remembered with a saving clause—"it won't be so bad as all that." Afterward, on reflection, the disciple may say, "Ah! he was right after all," but that is a reflection for the period after the catastrophe, not during it. The memory of Jesus' predictions of ignominy and death with the hope of supernatural victory in the end, might come back to Peter after the crucifixion and prepare him for belief in the resurrection; at the moment of the crucifixion he might very well be conscious of nothing but the collapse of his hopes. On the other hand, the position championed by Wrede and others, who regard the predictions of the Passion as *vaticinia ex eventu*, leaves the belief in the resurrection, so persistent, so victorious, more mysterious than ever. It seems to me that the view set forth in Mark is essentially the historical view. The messiahship of Jesus was a conviction of the inner circle of disciples, a secret from the multitude. The minds of this inner circle were running on thrones and the messianic glory shortly to be revealed. Jesus had not "transformed the messianic idea," but he was thinking less of the messianic glory than of the bitter cup that he must first drink and the deep waters in which he must be "baptized."

Nevertheless there is a sense, on the eschatological view, in which it is true to say that Jesus had radically changed the messianic ideal. He had changed it, not by "spiritualizing" it, but by adding to it. The ideal of King Messiah, coming in glory on the clouds of heaven to judge the world and vindicate the elect of God, he left untouched, but he prefixed to it a prologue. He prefixed to it not a doctrine about Messiah, but the actual course of his own career. We call it his *ministry*—why? Because his view of the office of the Man who was predestined to be Messiah was that he should "minister" to the needs of God's people (Mark 10:45). According to Mark, Jesus went up to Jerusalem to die, to be killed, believing that thereby the kingdom of God would come. And his great resolve has to be judged in the light of its amazing success.